

Increased costs could scale down Loop 202

By Doug Murphy
Staff Writer

Increased costs for the South Mountain Loop 202 could mean engineers will scale down the project to save money.

"We have any number of things we

can do," said Eric Anderson, transportation director for the Maricopa Association of Governments, which oversees the Valley transportation system.

He said that reducing the width of the right of way, to cut the amount of
more Loop 202, see page 3

"Don't build the freeway and ruin a wonderful community!"

**Taken from
written comments
of Ahwatukee
Foothills residents**

Loop 202

from page 1

land, homes and businesses the state needs to buy, could be one possibility. He also said that finding an engineering solution to large, and expensive, drainage basins might be another way to cut costs.

The problem is that the project was budgeted at about \$1.1 billion but preliminary estimates released to the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team April 6 put the estimated cost for land and construction at between \$1.7 and \$2.4 billion.

"The reality is we need to come back and get the costs down," said Anderson, because MAG and Valley planners are counting on the freeway being constructed.

"Technically the 202 is an extremely important link in our regional transportation system. We're building a system here, not separate segments," Anderson said. "Everything has to be connected up for it to work."

But he also admitted that the 2004 regional transportation plan approved by voters, which included 344 miles of new or improved freeways, might not be doable because of rising costs.

The reason is simple.

"Construction costs have increased dramatically and right of way costs are going up faster than construction costs," Dan Lance, an engineer with ADOT, told the advisory team.

The advisory team had seen preliminary construction estimates last month, so the roughly \$1 to \$1.3 billion price tag didn't come as a surprise.

But the release of land costs, anywhere from \$600 million for 370 homes to \$1.1 billion for 536 homes and some businesses, took many members by surprise.

And even those costs could go up.

"This is just a snapshot in time," said Amy Edwards, an engineer with HDR Construction and the project leader.

No decision on reducing the costs of the freeway or on buying homes has been made.

The advisory team will select a route on the west side of the project at the April 27 meeting. The team will take a break for the summer, to give the Gila River Indian Community time to decide if it wants to allow ADOT to explore possible routes on tribal land



Traffic bottles up Interstate 10 on Monday morning.

U. Frank Williams Jr./AFN

ADOT buying some homes

The Arizona Department of Transportation hasn't settled on a route for the South Mountain Loop 202, but it is quietly discussing buying a small handful of homes.

"ADOT isn't initiating any acquisitions," agency spokesman Matt Burdick said last week.

But, he added, in a small number of cases, where

there is a clear hardship, and the homeowners have contacted ADOT, negotiations are underway.

"I know one case was a couple being transferred out of state," Burdick said, adding that it was on a "case by case" basis, based upon a hardship.

-Doug Murphy

south of Phoenix.

If not, the advisory team will meet in the fall to consider using Pecos as the route from Interstate 10 in Ahwatukee Foothills, west around South Mountain, and reconnecting with I-10 somewhere between 55th Avenue and the Loop 101/I-10 interchange.

To see reports involving aspects of the freeway's construction, visit www.southmountainfreeway.org. Staff writer Doug Murphy can be reached at (480) 898-7914 or dmurphy@aztrib.com.

Ahwatukee Foothills News
April 12, 2006